

Happy
Spring

AXEMAN REPORT

APRIL 2007



FROM THE CDR

Dear Family & Friends of Alpha Company 1-121st FA BN,

Greetings from Kuwait. I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and well.

Ah yes, Spring is here. Well, for most of you back home, it's springtime. For us here, well, we're back to the 100+ degree mark. Not really what we call spring, especially the Mainers in our company. But nonetheless, springtime for Kuwait. And just like most of you have been experiencing back home, we have had our share of fluctuating weather come through our area.

Over the course of April, we've seen several thunderstorms with torrential downpours of rain, and we've seen some pretty tense sand/wind storms roll through. In either case, everyone weathered the storms just fine and are driving on with mission.



**A shot of the snow storm in Limestone, Maine.
Much different than the sand/rain storms of Kuwait.**

In case you have not visited the website recently http://www.me.ngb.army.mil/Family/Family_Pages/SECFOR%20II/SECFOR%20II%20Default1.htm and have read the posting from the 1-121st FA Battalion Executive Officer, **MAJ Brian Wolhaupter**, or heard from your loved one; we are in the midst of moving to a new location in Kuwait called Camp Virginia. During the course of the next 40 or so days, we will have executed a complete move from one location to another . . . while maintaining our operational capability. It is not a light undertaking, however everyone is working diligently to execute the plan. Just as the missions that your soldiers routinely execute day after day with superb diligence and perseverance, so too are they executing the movement plan. Please checkout the website for additional updates and information. You'll also find the new mailing address for letters and packages. Essentially just a "zip code" change in the APO part of the address. All the other information for your soldier that you put on the envelopes and packages remain the same.

As for our missions, your soldiers continue to professionally execute them. You should be extremely proud, as I am, as they continue to shine.

This month, we had the unique opportunity to host embedded media from the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram, as reporter/columnist **Bill Nemitz** and photographer **Shawn Ouellette** spent some time with the Axemen of Alpha Company here in Kuwait and on the road through Iraq.



SSG Jason Liss prepares to "clear his vision" after getting caught in a recent downpour.

As for the weather back home, well I personally got a taste of it while I was on R & R leave early this month, as on the second day of my leave we received around 12 inches of snow, followed by a few more snow storms over next week and a half. Strangely, I didn't mind at all. I know most of you think I've lost it, but after these several months of looking at nothing but sand and desert, snow was a welcome and beautiful sight. As a matter of fact, the first thing I did after exiting the Presque Isle Airport building was walk to the closest snow bank and make my first snowball of the season. It felt pretty refreshing.



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On behalf of the men of Alpha Company, I wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all who made the media embed possible. Also a special thanks to **Bill Nemitz** and **Shawn Ouellette** for the coverage they provided and the exceptionally professional job they performed in covering your soldiers. The articles and pictures were outstanding and I still get comments from the 1-121st FA Battalion Leadership and Staff on the coverage they provided. For those who may have missed it, you can find the stories and pictures at the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram website at <http://pressherald.maintoday.com/news/iraq/>. Again a big thanks to Bill and Shawn. {Note: There are more pictures provided by Shawn at the end of the newsletter in the "Closing Shots" section}.



Posing for a picture prior to going out on mission with the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram embedded media are from left to right: (front) SGT Leonard Hanson; SSG Gary Jandreau; SPC Jeremiah Cuevas; Reporter/Columnist Bill Nemitz; SGT Randy Bowen; SPC Hugh Goodfellow; (middle) Photographer Shawn Ouellette; 1LT John Gates; (back) 2LT Rommel Ferrer; SPC Helman Roman; SPC Bobby Aleman; SPC Austin Wing and PFC Jeffrey Atwood.

In the world of sports, congratulations to the Maine Black Bears Hockey Team for a very successful season. Although it didn't finish the way we all would have liked, you should be proud of all your accomplishments throughout the year. I'm looking forward to next season as I know it will be just as successful. I would like to thank the team, Coach Whitehead, and the University of Maine for the support they have shown for not only the Alpha Company Axemen and their families, but all their support for all military service members and their families. To Coach Whitehead and his family, please know you are in our thoughts and prayers as we mourn for your personal loss.

Congratulations to the soldiers listed in 1SG Paul Eubank's section on their recent, well deserved promotions. These soldiers have worked extremely hard and are ready for the challenges of their Non Commissioned Officer positions.

Our sincere, heartfelt thanks goes out again this month to the following for the generous support they've provided to the Alpha Company soldiers: **Roger Quandt, the Sun Journal, and Dunkin Donuts** for the numerous cases of editions of the Sun Journal accompanied with the POUNDS of Dunkin Donuts Coffee; **Valecia Harriman from Alion Science in Bath, Maine** for the packages of home baked cookies and snack foods; **Pastor George Darling and the Peoples United Methodist Church in Newport, Maine** for the package of personal care items, snack foods and puzzle books; **Jen Benson, MSG Barbara Claudell, Maine FAC** and all the **Girl Scout Organizations** that donated the many, many boxes of Girl Scout Cookies we've received over the course of this month; and again to **EVERYONE** who I might have missed. Bless you all!!!

Well, that's all for this month. Next month's newsletter will be coming from our new location. Thanks again to all our family and friends for your continued support. Be proud of your soldiers as they continue to set the standard of performance for all to emulate.

Until we chat again.

v/r

CPT Kent A. Cousins
Commander
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 6"

Go Black Bears!!!!



From The "Top"

Hello everyone!

Spring has sprung! It's getting hot though we still have a surprising rain once in awhile. Last week strong storms passed over us with winds that threatened to collapse our tents. There was enough rain that there were mini-lakes scattered across Navistar.





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Going on to bigger and better things, this month we promoted the following well-deserved Soldiers:

SSG Christopher McBean – Maine
SSG Scot Mackenzie - Maine
SGT Jeremy Cote – Maine
SGT Randy Bowen – Maine
SGT Leonard Hanson, II – Maine
SGT Peter Paradis – Maine

Reenlistments/extensions this month:

SGT Michael Tilton – Nevada

We now have about 90 days left before we return home. 90 days! It's hard to believe that it was almost a year ago that we flew into the late afternoon oven that was Kuwait. Many of our Soldiers were a little disoriented at seeing such a flat sandy landscape that didn't have a hint of green to it. And of course our western comrades were a little disoriented at seeing a landscape that reminded them so much of their previous duty station at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA.

Nine months have come and gone since our arrival. So much has happened in those nine months that our Soldiers are not the same ones who boarded the airplane in the Deep South last year. They're older, wiser, sometimes a little cynical, but always grateful for the successful completion of another mundane, even boring, mission. Even when a mission isn't ordinary it's their skill, judgment, and experience that enable them to succeed. Many of them, in spite of their age and rank, have proven to be excellent Gun Truck Commanders, Escort Commanders, and Convoy Commanders.

Best of all is that many of the units we escort across Iraq ask for Alpha Company, and many times ask for our Escort Commanders and Convoy Commanders by name. If you knew all of the responsibilities that come with those positions you would be amazed at and in awe of your Soldiers. As the First Sergeant of Alpha Company I'm extremely proud of them.

Well, that's it for this month's column. As always, thank you to everyone for your support while we're deployed far from home. Take care and be safe. Believe it or not, we'll see all of you soon – only six more paydays to go!

1SG Paul M. Eubank
First Sergeant
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 7"

HQS PLATOON

Hello!!

This is a rather short column this month. No, it's not due to Groundhog Syndrome, though that hasn't changed. The Gun Trucks still truck, the mechanics still wrench, Commo still communicates, the TOC still yells, and Admin always rules (we'll even show you 2-3 photographs of smiling HQ Platoon Soldiers to show you what we mean).

And of course everyone higher up wants 150% even when it doesn't make sense.

But all of that's okay. You know why? It means that our lives at Navistar and on the road remains somewhat boring and routine compared to what could be. Okay, sometimes there is combat action. Even so, Groundhog Syndrome is okay because it means everyone is okay. Only six paydays until we come back home! In case no one's noticed, some of our guys have been mailing stuff back home. It's amazing how much stuff somebody accumulates even though we live in temporary air-conditioned wooden floored tents. It's not just what the Soldiers pick up at the PX's or the hajji shops in Iraq, or what they order through Amazon.com or any of the other hundreds of websites, it's also the many things that all of you have mailed since we deployed over here last year.

If you attached wheels to the tents and chained them to the Gun Trucks we'd look like a Gypsy caravan with an attitude on the move looking for a new home. That's it for this month. I only have 252 hours before I board the plane and fly back to Kuwait.

The Axemen of Northern Kuwait

SSG Stanley Hampton
Admin NCO
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman Historian"





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1st PLATOON

Greetings from Navistar,

I wanted to put 'Navistar' in the greeting cause as most have you have heard it will most likely be the last time this newsletter will originate from this location. It is a bitter sweet occasion. As much as a person can, we have made this place in the desert our home away from home. It is humorous to hear your soldiers out on the road say they are going "home" when headed back to Navistar. That is the bitter, the sweet is the timeline that puts us closer to being really home.

Geographically, the FOB we are moving to is closer to the airport that has the plane that will carry us back to you, our family and friends. I can assure you that we are looking forward to that time.

Despite those good thoughts, all of us here realize we still have a lot of work yet to do. In the next few months we will be doing the missions that are inherent with this job and, sooner than later, we will be training the soldiers that are taking over for us. Also, there is much equipment to be turned in, turned over and handed off. Lots to do. And I assure you, we are up to it.

We had some interesting guests with us for the last week. Reporter **Bill Nemitz** of the Portland Press Herald and photographer **Shawn Patrick Ouellette** came to Kuwait to spend some time and take some photos of the boys from Maine. For this month's installment of pictures for the newsletter, I encourage you to go to <http://pressherald.maintoday.com/news/iraq/> and read the stories **Bill Nemitz** wrote and view the pictures **Shawn Ouellette** took. They give a unique view on the guys and the mission they perform.

We in 1st Platoon were saddened to have to have a soldier, **SGT Joseph Nott**, go home for emergency leave to attend his father's funeral. Our thoughts are with him and we request you remember him and his family during this difficult time.

See you all soon,

CW2 David Cheney
1st Platoon PLT LDR
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 10"



2nd PLATOON

Hello from 2nd Platoon Alpha Company.

Every one has had to fill the restless hours here between missions somehow. Hobbies, movies, reading and going to the gym are some of our favorite pastimes. The soldier you saw on leave between camp Shelby and going to Kuwait may not exist anymore. They have probably changed and hopefully for the better. Some have been focused and used the time constructively. Others have just been treading water and killing time.

SFC Bruce Roscoe, SSG Scott Sjoberg, SGT Kyland Lusby, SGT Nathan Williams and SGT Michael Harrington have spent an incredible amount of time in the gym trying to keep their minds off of home. As a result they look really trim and healthy. So do **SPC Arthur Churchill, SPC William Greeley, SPC Henry Russell** and **PFC David Sweatt**. **SGT Paul Woodman**, though not a gym rat, has walked hundreds of miles around the FOB in an effort to lose weight and has shed well over fifty pounds. He wins the award for the most improved.

SSG Michael Hall will win the medal for most books read. He is reading one every day or two when not doing anything else. He said he has read over one hundred and fifty books since arriving in Kuwait three hundred days ago. He was thrilled to find out Amazon.com would ship books over here. He has devoured every subject from international relations and economics to science fiction. Anyone with a question uses him as a reference source.

SGT Ralph Bartman and **SPC David Saucier** have collected the most movies. The local merchants at each FOB sell inexpensive copies of movies, usually two dollars each or three for five dollars. We generally can buy first run movies over here the same day they are released to theaters back in the states. Some soldiers now have over two hundred movies but **Bartman** and **Saucier** are the undisputed movie kings.

Now that we are getting short, under ninety days until we go home, people are planning their futures again: Knock on wood. We will have things to do when we get home.

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SGT Ralph Bartman plans on investing in a tractor trailer with his savings and going trucking. **SGT Paul Woodman** is planning an addition to his house and **SPC Henry Russell** has bought a house near his college. **SSG Michael Hall** is going to finish his house and **SFC Bruce Roscoe** wants to buy land and build a second home.

Some soldiers are planning on returning to school. **SGT Nathan Williams**, **SSG Scott Sjoberg**, **SGT Paul Woodman** and **SPC Henry Russell** are four with definite plans to finish their education. **SPC Jeremiah Cuevas** wants to pursue a degree and then get his masters of divinity and stay in the guard as a Chaplin. Everyone has some kind of plan.

The one thing we all plan on, no matter what we have done for the last year, is to spend a lot of time with family, friends and the people we love.

Until next time.

1LT H. Michael Gary
2nd PLT Platoon Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 20"

3rd PLATOON

AXEMAN 30 BAGHDAD BLOG

Well, well, well; the Axemen of Alpha Company completed another month of convoy security missions and we are getting closer to coming home and looking forward to being with our loved ones sometime this year.

First and foremost, I wish everyone a belated Happy Easter. We didn't have an Easter Egg Hunt; however, we did our own hunting of favorite Girl Scout Cookies in the care packages that we received, thank you to the Girl Scout Troops that has adopted us.

And our sympathy goes out to the U.M. Black Bears, the Commander, the 1SG and the rest of the Black Bears college hockey fans for a tough, challenging season; hey, at least you guys have a college hockey team unlike us Nevadans.

The platoon/company has been pretty busy with different tasks ranging from ongoing missions, warrior training/qualifications, vehicle maintenance/upgrades, and preparation for the transfer of authority to our upcoming replacements. Everyone has been motivated, focused, and determined to accomplish the mission and preparing to move to another base away from the Iraq/Kuwait border.

On or about mid April 2007, one of our outstanding NCOs in the platoon re-enlisted in the Army. **SGT Michael J. Tilton**, a GNR/TC from 2nd Squad, signed a six year contract with bonus. **SGT Tilton** serves as an inspiration to his subordinates/peers and constantly sets the example by a display of loyalty, duty, and selfless service.

I would also like to thank the Maine reporters, **Bill Nemitz** and **Shawn Ouellette**, for giving the Axemen of 1/121 FA BN an opportunity to "paint the picture" of our convoy escort missions to our loved ones back home.

This months newsletter personal comment comes from a 1st squad member:

"We all feel like it's time to come home. The feeling of seeing our families and knowing we have accomplished our mission for our country."

From **SGT Kendall, Robert** (3rd PLT, 1st SQD)

Thank you for the continued support and prayers; we are counting the number of days until we are home to see you all again. Never Broken!!!

Until next month, be safe and best wishes.

2LT Rommel Ferrer
3rd PLT Platoon Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 30"



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2LT Rommel Ferrer recites the Oath of Re-enlistment to SGT Michael Tilton in front of the Alpha Company Axeman sign.



Posing for a picture during a recent stop are from left to right: (front) SGT Seth Jensen, SGT Michael Tilton, and SGT Nathan Daisley; (rear) SGT Phillip Fred and SSG Robert Cole.



Riding out a recent sand storm in the protective cover of his M114 is SGT Jason Lashley.



Posing in front of the infamous "Cross Swords of Central Baghdad's Saber Stadium" is SGT Robert Kendall.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry
6400 N. Range Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89009



April is now behind us here at Camp Navistar, and the spirit of the cavalry still lives on in 4th Platoon, Alpha Company, 1-121 FA.

All of 4th Platoon is doing well and confidence is still very much with the Blackhorse brothers as we begin to look forward to the end of the deployment. With the climate much like that of Fort Irwin, April has begun to bring in a taste of the heat that we have happily left behind in the first few months. Fortunately, most days and every evening have provided very comfortable temperatures.

With the end of the deployment so close, we have been able to send personal items home with the confidence of knowing that we will not be here for much longer. Although our mission tempo is still high, the end is well within our sight.

As always, the many care packages and Easter gifts are greatly appreciated by the troops. We all thank you for the support you have given us and the many, many prayers.

Until next month.

1LT Frederick Garcia
4th PLT Platoon Leader
Company A, 1-121st FA BN (SECFOR)
"Axeman 40" a.k.a. "Ghost rider 40"

Closing Shots



Poising on a recent mission with a special flag are from left to right: SSG Stanley Hampton, SGT Michael Tilton, SGT Seth Jensen, SPC Ronald Easton, and SFC Steven Kovacs.



SSG Jason Liss seems to be enjoying a recent "shower" in Kuwait. Will "April Showers bring May Flowers"?



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Closing Shots (continued) (thanks to bill nemitz and shawn ouellette)



Packing some universal totes in preparation for moving are from left to right: SPC Glenn Cole; SPC Donald Brinkman; and SSG John Thibodeau.



Peeking down into the guntruck during a communications check is gunner SPC Austin Wing.



Discussing some platoon business over coffee are left to right: 1st Platoon Leadership – CW2 David Cheney and SFC John Martin.



At Right: Posing for photographer Shawn Ouellette prior to moving out on mission are: Gunner SPC William Greeley and Driver Arthur Churchill.



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Closing Shots (continued) (thanks to bill nemitz and shawn ouellet ette)



2nd Platoon soldiers gather for a discussion while preparing for a mission.



SSG Gary Jandreau (left) and SGT Leonard Hanson II (right) share a laugh as they share some of their experiences with Reporter/Columnist Bill Nemitz and Photographer Shawn Ouellette of the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram.



Reporter/Columnist Bill Nemitz (left) observes some instruction from CW2 David Cheney (right) on the battle lock system as 1LT John Gates (center) looks on.



Posing in front of an M1117 Guardian ASV (Armored Security Vehicle) are from left to right: SSG Gary Jandreau and SGT Leonard Hanson II.



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Closing Shots (continued) (thanks to bil I nemitz and shawn ouellette)



Alpha Company Axemen soldiers listen to the convoy briefing given by 2LT Rommel Ferrer prior to the mission.



Listening to the convoy brief prior to the mission are from left to right: SSG Gary Jandreau; PFC David Sweatt; SGT Jeremy Cote; SPC Jeremiah Cuevas; SGT Leonard Hanson II and Convoy Commander 2LT Rommel Ferrer.



Gunner SPC Jeffrey Atwood (left) and Truck Commander SGT Bobby Aleman (right) verify the load prior to mission.



Driver Hugh Goodfellow is pictured from inside the M1114 HMMWV.

